

Creating learning environments

Schools must strive to provide secure learning environments in which the individual student is valued and respected. Schools need to ensure that the relationships students establish with each other and with teachers, which are of central importance to development and learning, will flourish. Student learning is best supported through strong, communicative relationships between teacher, student and parent. In all schools offering the MYP, parents are informed, involved and welcomed as partners with a clear role to play in supporting the school and their own children.

The role of the teacher

Teachers, collectively and individually, play a key role in the creation of educational environments that encourage students to take responsibility, to the greatest possible extent, for their own learning. To create these environments, teachers must provide resources and support for each student to become involved in inquiry, using the tools and strategies that best fit the student's development and ways of learning.

The teacher must be familiar with and responsive to the needs and interests of individual students, and aware of the cultural and social contexts in which they live and learn. In the learning environment, the role of the teacher is to facilitate connections between the student's prior knowledge and the knowledge available through new experiences. The range of development and learning demonstrated by each member of a group of students will inform which practices the teacher will need to implement to meet the needs of both the group and the individual.

In the MYP classroom, the teacher facilitates student learning by creating opportunities for and supporting student inquiries; by asking carefully thought-out, open-ended questions; and by encouraging students to ask questions of each other as well as of the teacher.

Using best classroom practice

An MYP classroom can only be fully effective in the context of a whole-school commitment to the programme. All schools offering the MYP have a commitment to learning and to developing international-mindedness. It is a school where all constituents are encouraged to identify problems and seek solutions in the pursuit of continuous improvement towards common goals. Within this setting, each classroom operates as a microcosm of the larger institution.

An MYP classroom is itself a model of a community—it is a lively place, characterized by collaborative and purposeful activity. Within this community, students are empowered to do their best, for themselves, and to contribute to the learning and well-being of others. They are supportive of each other and will come to establish their personal set of beliefs and values. The community encourages reflection, and thoughtful consideration of issues, problems and successes is valued highly.

An MYP classroom is also a balanced classroom, in the sense that teachers will balance the pursuit of understanding and the construction of meaning with the acquisition of knowledge, skills and attitudes. To do this, teachers will use a range of teaching and assessment strategies and resources to meet the needs of each student. In this setting, students are actively engaged in planning and assessing their own learning.

MYP classrooms are dynamic learning environments, with students moving from group work to individual work in response to their needs and the needs of their inquiries.

In summary, an MYP classroom is a place for thinking and where the expectations are high. It is an environment that is focused on learning.